



## **2015 All-America City Award Application *Spotlight on Engaging and Supporting Vulnerable Boys and Young Men***

### **Deadlines:**

**September 2014-February 2015: Monthly conference calls**

**November 25, 2014: Submit Letter of Intent to Apply** (Save \$100 on your application fee when you submit a Letter of Intent to Apply by November 25, 2014!)

**March 10, 2015: Submit Application**

**April 2015: Finalists Announced.** Finalist community delegations will be invited to Denver to present.

**June 11-14, 2015: Peer-Learning Workshops & Awards Presentation/Competition** in Denver, Colorado.

### **Application Guidelines:**

#### **The All-America City Award (spotlight on Engaging and Supporting Vulnerable Boys and Young Men)**

The National Civic League invites you to apply for America's oldest and most recognized community award, now in its 66<sup>th</sup> year.

The All-America City Award recognizes ten communities annually for outstanding civic impact and action planning. Winning applicants demonstrate innovation, inclusiveness, civic engagement, and cross sector collaboration by describing successful efforts to address pressing local challenges. For this year, 2015, NCL is pleased to announce a spotlight on vulnerable boys and young men. Applicants are asked to feature in their application a program in which they are engaging and supporting vulnerable boys and men with the goal of success in school and in life. Key issues you may consider are early childhood education, healthy communities, access to housing and jobs, racial healing, male achievement, empowerment, income inequality, among others. NCL takes a broad and inclusive view of vulnerable boys and young men as those that have been historically underserved and at-risk including African American, Latino, Native American, Asian Pacific Islander, economically challenged, disabled, LGBTQI, religious and other underserved identities. We hope to also hear about how you are engaging and support vulnerable girls and young women and projects that support all genders. NCL values gender equality and views this spotlight as an important way to highlight the targeted successful approaches for vulnerable boys and men. NCL recognizes these initiatives are an essential part of the work it takes to create healthy and prosperous communities for all residents. This spotlight builds on NCL's more than 20 years of work on diversity, inclusiveness, racial equity, and youth leadership in communities across the country.

A youth member of one finalist community is also recognized with the AAC Youth Award. Nominations for this award will be requested after finalists are announced.

### Community Information

Community name and state: City of Somerville, MA

Your community is applying as a:

☐ Neighborhood ☐ Village ☐ Town ☐ Tribe ☒ City ☐ County ☐ Region

If applying as a region, name participating communities: \_\_\_\_\_

If applying as a neighborhood, name city: \_\_\_\_\_

Has your community applied before? **Yes** No If Yes, which years: \_\_\_\_\_

Has your community been a Finalist before? **Yes** No If Yes, which years: 1972, 2008, 2009, 2014

Has your community been an All-America City before? **Yes** No If Yes, which years: 1972, 2009

### Contact Information

All-America City Award contact (primary contact person available throughout competition & follow-up):

Name: Jackie Rossetti Title (if any): Deputy Director of Communications

Organization/Government/Other: City of Somerville

Address: 93 Highland Ave. City, State, Zip Somerville, MA 02143

Phone (business/day): 617-625-6600 ext 2614 Mobile Phone 857-636-2396

E-mail Address(es): JRossetti@somervillema.gov

The applying community will receive a complimentary membership (or membership renewal if an AAC application was submitted last year) to the National Civic League for one year. To whom should this membership be directed?

Name Mayor Joseph A. Curtatone

Address 93 Highland Ave.

City, State & Zip Code Somerville, MA 02143

Phone Number 617-625-6600 ext. 2100 Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Email Mayor@somervillema.gov

We agree to follow NCL's rules regarding use of the All-America City Award logo, a registered trademark of the National Civic League. We allow NCL and the All-America City Award to share this application and the information enclosed in it with the NCL and AAC networks to promote the work of our community. If we are named an All-America City, we agree to conduct a post-AAC conference call or regional forum for the AAC network that features our projects. In a pay-it-forward spirit, if named a finalist or All-America City, we agree to support AAC through an NCL membership for a minimum of the next three years. See membership details [here](#).

Signature: Jackie Rossetti Date: 3/13/15

Name: Jackie Rossetti Title: Deputy Director of Communications

## Community Statistics and Map

Note: Use the most up-to-date statistics possible for your neighborhood, town, city, county, or region (source suggestions: U.S. Census Bureau, State Department of Economic Security, State Department of Finance, Department of Public Health, and local school statistics).

POPULATION (in year 2010 or most recent): 75,754

Source/Date:

POPULATION PERCENTAGE CHANGE 2000-2010 (indicate + or -): -2.23%

Source/Date:

RACIAL/ETHNIC POPULATION BREAKDOWN:

White	<u>73.9</u> %
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	<u>10.6</u> %
Black or African American	<u>6.8</u> %
Asian	<u>8.7</u> %
American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN)	<u>0.3</u> %
Mixed Race	<u>3.6</u> %
Other	<u>    </u> %

Source/Date: **2010 Census Data**

MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME: \$ 64,603

Source/Date: **2010 Census Data**

PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES BELOW POVERTY LEVEL: 9.6%

Source/Date: **2010 Census Data**

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE: 6.3%

Source/Date: **2012 ACS 5 Year Aggregate Data**

POPULATION BREAKDOWN BY AGE GROUP (percentages, if available):

19 years old and under	<u>14.9</u> %
20-24	<u>12.2</u> %
25-44	<u>45.7</u> %
45-64	<u>18.3</u> %
65 and over	<u>9.2</u> %

Source/Date: **2010 Census**

PERCENTAGE OF HOME OWNERSHIP: 32.4%

Source/Date: **2010 Census**

WORKFORCE DISTRIBUTION -- Name the three largest employment sectors (include military services and/or installations, if any) in your community and provide the percentage of total employed in each:

- **Education services, health care and social assistance** 31.5%
- **Professional, scientific, management, administrative and waste management services** 18.2%
- **Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services** 10.4%

Source/Date: **2010 Census**

**MAP** -- Please attach a state map (8.5" x 11") with your community clearly marked.

## ALL-AMERICA CITY AWARDS CRITERIA

**Civic Engagement and Collaboration:** comprehensive citizen/resident engagement in decision-making and action planning, cross-sector collaboration (business, local government, nonprofits, military, etc.) and regional collaboration.

**Inclusiveness and Diversity:** recognition and involvement of diverse segments and perspectives (ethnic, racial, socio-economic, age, sexual orientation, gender expression, people with disabilities, and others) in community decision-making.

**Innovation:** creative use and leveraging of community resources.

**Impact:** *demonstrable* significant and measurable achievements in the past 5 years (for example: dollars raised, jobs created or lives impacted), particularly in projects that address the community's greatest challenges.

### PART I: TELL YOUR COMMUNITY'S STORY

Section A: Tell us your community's story. Focus on the last ten years of your community's progress and development. Utilizing the awards criteria (above) describe how your community addresses its pressing challenges and plans for its future. How are citizens/residents involved in planning and implementation? Provide examples of cross sector collaboration among the neighborhoods, government, businesses, and nonprofit organizations engaged in these efforts. How is the community illustrating diversity and inclusiveness? What is your community's vision? Include real examples of how your community has demonstrated its strengths, innovations, and faced its challenges. Don't forget to tell us about the people in your community. (2,000 word maximum)

[Somerville, Massachusetts](#), is a small City located just north of Boston. Officially, 75,000 residents call Somerville home. Unofficially, well over 80,000 people occupy just 4.1 square miles, making it the most densely populated community in New England. Decades ago, Somerville was one of the most densely populated communities in the world. Somerville has a history of being welcoming to immigrants. Today, more than one-third of our residents are foreign born, hailing from countries all over the world including El Salvador, Haiti, China, and Brazil. More than 52 languages are spoken in our schools (three times the state average) and more often than not English is not the primary language spoken at home. 14.9% of Somerville residents are below the poverty line, compared with 10.7% statewide, and the socioeconomic diversity of our public school students is evident by the fact that 69% of our students are low-income students who qualify for free or reduced lunch. We are also a community with a broad range of English Language Learners (ELL); 51% of our students speak a first language other than English.

But we are not simply a diverse community, we are a community that embraces and celebrates diversity and that understands and is deeply committed to addressing the needs of that diverse community. Through a broad range of programming and initiatives, we deeply support and encourage residents of all ages and all backgrounds to achieve their best possible life outcomes and a key part of this is our dedication to the health, well-being, education and life achievement of our youngest and most vulnerable residents, including at-risk boys and young men.

As a culturally, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse community, we work to identify and understanding challenges faced by each of our respective demographic groups as we also work to identify existing barriers to success ranging broadly from barriers such as poverty or limited English skills to racism and access to enrichment opportunities. We address these challenges both with smaller targeted campaigns aimed at supporting specific populations, including young men from particular cultures, and by serving boys and young men through our many systemic approaches that focus on the “whole child” or individual. Understanding that a wide variety of factors influences behavior and therefore achievement for our young residents, our collaborative work engages agencies, representatives, and groups from all sectors to support and engage these young people. From birth to high school graduation and beyond, it’s imperative that focusing on every aspect of a child’s life, male or female, American or American immigrant, gives that child the tools for a healthy and productive future.

We work to bridge existing gaps first by fostering an inclusive community where community members’ opinions and ideas are important and necessary in forming the basis of our policies, development plans, celebrations, and all that we do to serve our community and our constituents. Somerville is known for its award-winning community engagement efforts conducted regularly in at least four languages. From our immigrant outreach program SomerViva to our nationally renowned multi-lingual neighborhood planning program Somerville by Design or our multilingual social media presence, we strive to ensure that every member of our community has a voice in shaping how *their* community works *for* them and, more importantly, *with* them. Collaboration across every sector is vital to a successful and healthy city, and Somerville has an exceptionally engaged population and a strong track record for collaboration particularly when it comes to our youth.

Next we collaborate closely with community organizations in serving vulnerable youth and young adults on a number of initiatives. Representatives and constituents from government, non-profit organizations and social service agencies, local businesses and large corporations, and academia work together to create and sustain an environment that supports success in all aspects of a child’s life, from birth to entrance into higher education or the workforce as evidenced by our major efforts such as our nationally recognized Shape Up Somerville Healthy Living initiative to smaller, more targeted collaborations such as our Food Security Coalition.

We have a long resume of collaborative efforts focused primarily on school-aged children, that drew together each of these sectors to create a network through which barriers to academic success are identified, targeted, and addressed beginning with young children both in and outside of the classroom. Leading examples of this collaborative effort are [SomerPromise](#), a community-wide effort to improve the educational outcomes of Somerville’s children and youth; SomerReady, a community-wide initiative to develop kindergarten readiness and quality 0-K supports for all Somerville children regardless of income; and [Somerville Hub](#), a website produced by the Somerville Early Education Steering Committee to help connect all local families with young children to the full range of information and resources they need to raise healthy, active children from birth to age 8.

SomerPromise recognizes that many factors outside the classroom can affect a child or young adult’s academic and life success. So its central focus is to align and mobilize resources within the community to address academic, social, and environmental factors that can affect that success. This is an ambitious goal; the program aims to do no less than achieve equity and excellence in children’s lives during and out of school, from cradle to career. From their Prospectus:

We envision a future in which:

- Each and every child in Somerville has an equal opportunity to succeed in school, college, career, and life.
- Families feel confident in their ability to guide their children's learning and support their overall well-being.
- Our community has a collective sense of responsibility and togetherness when fostering student success in and outside of school.
- Our resources are aligned to address shared priorities based on evidence of what works

This approach to supporting the whole child understands the key roles that family, peer groups, health, hunger, and other factors play in whether any student will reach his or her full potential. It understands that we cannot act in a bubble to change children's lives for the better; cross-sector collaboration is essential to providing all necessary supports and resources for children and families to succeed regardless of income, family status, personal circumstances, or other barriers. It also represents a core value of our community: In Somerville, we believe that all students can, should, and will succeed if given proper tools and support, and it's a commitment proven across multiple programs and policies, but it's not a commitment many surrounding communities are able to make.

There should be no excuses when it comes to supporting student achievement. Which is why, while many communities across Massachusetts are cutting or adding fee structures to programs such as music, art, world languages, and athletics as cost saving measures, Somerville has increased funding and support for all of these programs despite the recent economic downturn, many times looking to partnerships and collaborations within the community to supplement funding or programming gaps. Moreover, there is no cost to our students to participate in these programs offered within our schools.

It's also why collaboration is not only important, it's essential. Students spend thirty hours or more each under the care and guidance of teachers and professionals in our public schools. Outside of school time, many children do not get healthy meals, or any meals. Outside of the classroom, many children are forced to act as head of household while parents work several jobs to keep roofs over their heads.

Our steady pursuit of enhancing student achievement is advancing how our students learn and they are reaping the benefits, especially in the phenomenal improvement in Student Growth on the [Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System \(MCAS\)](#), putting Somerville on par with some of [the highest performing districts in Massachusetts](#).

As part of the whole child approach, we know that substantial progress on academic achievement comes with multi-tiered support *outside* the classroom, which is why in the late 1990s many essential service providers and agencies founded the Somerville Youth Workers Network (YWN). Comprised of agencies serving youth of all ages and backgrounds, the YWN is a coalition that meets monthly to discuss youth issues and offer trainings on such issues as mandated reporting for youth workers and positive psychology.

Monthly meetings, in addition to regular communication via online forums and listservs with and for the youth that they serve, help these agencies maintain real-time updates and communications to effectively problem solve and identify issues that need to be addressed. Agencies at the table include but are not limited to:



- [Somerville Cares About Prevention](#), a community-based coalition that mobilizes Somerville residents, particularly youth, to prevent and address issues associated with substance abuse while promoting positive mental, spiritual, and physical health.
- [Somerville Community Health Agenda](#), an innovative partnership between Cambridge Health Alliance, the Somerville Health & Human Services Department and the community that works collaboratively to improve the health of Somerville residents.
- **Somerville Community Schools**, afterschool and summer camp programming and support offered through the Somerville Public Schools District.
- [Teen Empowerment](#) (*see Project 1 below*)
- [The Welcome Project](#), a community-based organization that builds the collective power of Somerville immigrants to participate in and shape community decisions through programs that strengthen the capacity of immigrant youth, adults and families to advocate for themselves and influence schools, government, and other institutions.
- **Immigrant / Youth Service Providers Group on Health**
- [Mystic Learning Center](#), a program/center for low-income children and families who live at the Mystic Public Housing Development and surrounding neighborhoods of East Somerville. The innovative parent and youth service model uses Mystic parents and teens to manage and design all aspects of the program to meet the needs of the community. By being active participants in MLC, residents have the opportunity to enhance their own personal development, have an impact on the development of the program, and make contributions to community life. MLC brings residents together for mutual support as they acquire skills to overcome persistent poverty while creating a healthier community.
- [Wayside Youth and Family Services](#), a community-based program that provides housing and transitional care to homeless young adults, ages 18- 22, from the Somerville, Cambridge and Greater Boston areas.
- [Boys and Girls Clubs](#), a non-profit whose mission is to inspire and enable all young people to become productive, responsible and caring citizens.

Committing to the whole child means understanding the need to begin intervention and prevention work in early childhood, building the foundation for early health and success. It also means continuing to support the whole child as they advance into adolescence and adulthood, where new challenges present themselves to the “child” who must now start to find their way in the world. It also means understanding that no two children are the same, everyone has different strengths and weaknesses, and we must therefore work to support and encourage *each* child, giving them the tools to create their own path needs to be paired with additional, proactive prevention strategies that give these youth additional opportunities and outlets as they grow into themselves.

It’s with this lens that we’ll focus our three community projects below. A small snapshot of the intricate network Somerville community partners have created to send our young people into higher education, the workforce, or whichever path they choose armed with confidence, leadership and job skills, and the knowledge that Somerville is more than a city, but a true community and a home.

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## **PART II: DESCRIBE THREE COMMUNITY-DRIVEN PROJECTS**

Describe your three best projects that have resulted in significant local impact and action planning within the past five years. Past All-America City Award applicants have highlighted projects to increase third grade reading success for at-risk children, to increase health care for underserved populations, to create new businesses and jobs, to revitalize downtown, to engage youth in identifying and planning services and facilities, to promote cross sector collaborative centers, to increase fiscal sustainability, to develop emergency disaster plans, to recover from a natural disaster, and more. For 2015, NCL invites all applicants to include at least one project in their application that spotlights innovative approaches to engaging and supporting vulnerable boys and young men (examples include education readiness and success, health, jobs, housing, leadership, empowerment, income equality). Be sure to tell us how each of these projects promote civic engagement, collaboration, inclusiveness, innovation, and impact. See criteria above and consult NCL's Civic Index – available at no cost to applicants. Request it at [aac@ncl.org](mailto:aac@ncl.org).

## **PROJECT ONE**

Provide the project name and a description of its qualitative and quantitative impacts in the past five years. (2,000 word maximum) Tell us the challenge being addressed, actions taken, and the impact/outcomes of this project on your community's resident.

### **Teen Empowerment**

[The Center for Teen Empowerment](#) (TE) is a youth organizing and social change program, working exclusively with communities of opportunity<sup>1</sup>, engaging young people as leaders of efforts to turn their peers away from violence, gangs, and drugs, and toward positive community involvement.

TE organizes in communities with high rates of youth violence and other risk factors, low rates of youth achievement and, through the program, youth are trained as community organizers and develop effective strategies that involve their peers in creating positive social and instructional change in their communities and schools.<sup>2</sup> Teen Empowerment Somerville also serves as the lead facilitator for the communitywide Youth Workers Network.

Working in Boston and Somerville, MA and in Rochester, NY, TE hires low-income, urban teens to identify the most pressing issues in their communities and to develop a strategy to address those issues. Each year, more than 90 TE youth organizers conduct over 150 initiatives that involve over 5,000 youth, residents, public officials, and police in efforts to build peace, tolerance, and community. As part of this process, TE has resolved over 200 conflicts including those related to homicide, gang activity, and hate crimes and helped to substantially reduce youth violence in urban neighborhoods. In addition, TE provides consulting and training to help other service providers adapt our methods for use in their own programs.

Founded in 1992 by Stanley Pollack, a former street outreach worker in Somerville and national youth development consultant, Teen Empowerment began in some of the highest risk neighborhoods in Boston, expanding into Somerville in 2004 at the height of an epidemic of youth substance abuse and suicide. Since its implementation in Somerville, Teen Empowerment has statistically and significantly contributed to the reduction in youth substance abuse, high school dropout rates, and violent crimes among youth in the City. TE engages young people as leaders of efforts to turn their peers away from violence, gangs, and drugs, and toward positive community involvement.

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<sup>1</sup> Somerville utilizes strength-based language as opposed to negative language to describe constituent groups. "Communities of opportunity" refers mostly to "at risk" or "underserved" populations, such as gang-involved youth.

<sup>2</sup> [www.teenempowerment.org](http://www.teenempowerment.org)



The young men and women hired and served by TE often emphasize the connection between gang violence and the lack of jobs and educational opportunities available to urban youth.<sup>3</sup> A 2012 evaluative study by Dr. Russell Schutt, Chair of the Sociology Department at the University of Massachusetts Boston found that youth organizers in the TE Model are “of higher risk, have lower levels of self-esteem and employability, have more problematic relationships, and come from poorer families than youth in control groups<sup>4</sup>, however YO leave the program with “higher levels of employability and greatly improved self-esteem and are more civically engaged” than youth in control groups.<sup>5</sup>

Its programs provide essential esteem building and job skills, and programmatic and leadership support to enhance and support youth across the region. TE youth organizers facilitate local and regional youth efforts in fostering positive, healthy relationships with community leaders, most specifically Somerville Police Officers. Some such programs include:

### *Somerville Youth Organizing Initiative*

In this program, Youth Organizers (YO) work to identify critical issues facing their community and to develop a strategy to address those issues. TE uses a unique interactive approach to engage youth in activities, teach valuable skills, and build peer relationships among youth and supportive relationships between youth and adults. TE gives disconnected youth the opportunity to acquire power by working for positive change, rather than through the negative behaviors, such as gangs, weapons, pregnancy and crime, through which they have traditionally sought status. TE’s 23 years of experience show that many high-risk youth are willing and able to improve their communities and their own lives and have a positive influence on their peers by working as partners with adults. TE’s adult staff help youth through the process of planning and implementing a wide range of initiatives that engage large numbers of teens and adults in building tolerance and community.

### *Youth-Police Dialogues*

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, youth-police interactions are more likely to result in a use of force. Many studies have shown that minority youth are less likely to trust police and less likely to believe that police are there to protect them/keep them safe.

As with many communities nationwide, stigmas exist on both sides: youth, particularly immigrant youth, may fear interaction with police based on negative stereotypes and negative interactions as previously violent or troubled adolescents; police may see youth groups as potential threats to community safety, acting on impulse or information from other adult groups without first coming to understand issues behind actions.

Working with the Somerville Police Department and its Community Policing initiative, TE facilitates several Youth-Police Dialogues each year, bringing YO and members of the police department together for in-depth face-to-face interactions that include role play, breakout groups that focus on issues of concern for youth and breaking down existing barriers between youth and police, and other important

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.teenempowerment.org/pdfs/Teen-Empowerment-Somerville-Evaluation-2013.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.teenempowerment.org/pdfs/Teen-Empowerment-Somerville-Evaluation-2013.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.teenempowerment.org/pdfs/Teen-Empowerment-Somerville-Evaluation-2013.pdf>

discussions as determined by the group. A study by the Rochester Institute of Technology<sup>6</sup> found that TE's youth-police dialogues resulted in participants gaining empathy, understanding, and respect, with both youth and officers gaining new perspectives as well as new skills for how to work together effectively.

*Success Story:*

*"My name is Edward Dahlstedt. I am a 17 year old YO TE. I would like to discuss my experiences with the police over the last few years and how much my experiences and opinions have changed.*

*Not long ago, I hated all police. I believed the only way to make my voice heard was by working against them, and the idea of working with the police was almost laughable. I hung around a group of friends who shared similar feelings. We continuously discussed our negative thoughts toward police, making our negative feelings grow deeper. We engaged in such negative behaviors as starting unprovoked arguments with police, making angry gestures and even holding up signs with things like 'F\_ The Police,' and 'Police suck,' at public events, and that type of behavior only made things worse.*

*From my personal protests at public events most officers knew me by name. Although at the time I felt I was only expressing my first amendment right, soon enough I had a reputation as a troublemaker, and that was not what I wanted to be seen as. I wanted to give my opinion and voice how I felt about police in hopes that by bringing attention to our anger things would improve, but what I learned was that there is a way to get the attention and address my concerns without being known as a trouble maker. I wanted police in my community to have better understanding of teens and how they felt, but I didn't know how. I had no outlet to do it in a positive way.*

*That's when I found TE, or rather, they found me. Two of the program staff visited my school and talked about job openings for teens who wanted to make change in their community. I was instantly interested.*

*What I didn't know was that TE had been doing youth-police work for many years, and the new Chief had been participating with TE since he was a regular officer. I was so caught up in going against the police that I didn't realize there were other teens in Somerville working to improve these relationships. In our youth-police dialogues, officers and teens participate in activities like brainstorming issues that we both face, having one-on-one conversations with officers, and working together on ice breakers to solve problems together. In some of the dialogues I met some of the officers who go to know me through my sign holding. We got opportunities to sit down and talk with our officers and help bridge the gap so people would be more comfortable discussing community issues together, which led to us planning a first annual Youth and Police Basketball game.*

*Through these dialogues and planning with officers, I was able to find a positive outlet to express my feelings, and had my voice heard, not only by the officers but by the Chief of Police, who now all know me as a YO, not a trouble maker. I found that by having a venue to have my*

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.rit.edu/cja/criminaljustice/sites/rit.edu.cja.criminaljustice/files/docs/WorkingPapers/2014/2013-12.Teen%20Empowerment%20First%20Interim%20Report.pdf>

*voice heard and work directly with police and other teens to better the relationships between the groups was exactly what I needed. I am now on first name basis with many officers, and have formed a bond that I believe will last a life time. I hope to help my peers learn new ways to get their voices heard in a safe and productive way. I look forward to continuing to build positive relationships with the Police, and hope to guide my peers in the same way”*

### *Students and Teachers Engage Public Safety (STEPS)*

Building on the success of the youth-police work with TE, the Somerville Police Department (SPD) is working in collaboration with the Somerville Fire Department and the School Department to increase police visibility in our schools. This collaboration between public safety officials and school aged children will foster a stronger bond between public safety officials and Somerville youth while improving school safety. This initiative is an opportunity for public safety officers to become role models and mentors for young people.

The goals of the program, targeted to roll out at the beginning of the 2015-16 school year, are to: increase engagement between students, teachers, and public safety offices; enhance trust and build lasting relationships with the next generation; and build a bond between youth and officers that lasts beyond high school graduation. Officers in the program will sign up for a seven year commitment.

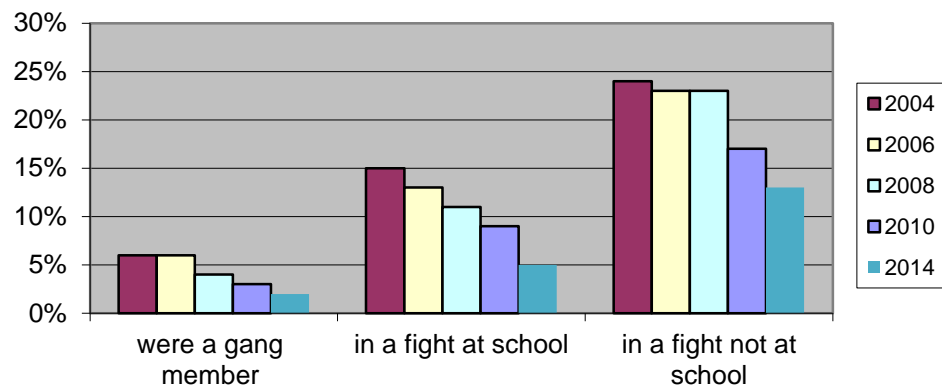
### *Youth Peace Conference*

TE’s largest annual event brings together hundreds of youth, community leaders, and law enforcement officers together for an afternoon of team building, open mic and open discussion sessions, and presentations of issues from violence and physical abuse to substance use to mental health crises and more. With an average attendance of 500 youth, it is one of, if not the largest events of its kind in the state. A series of workshops and breakout sessions provides opportunities youth to build relationships and share their ideas for community improvement. Through the Youth Workers Network and in collaboration with the Mayor’s office, TE is able to share youth input and ideas gathered at the conference with policy makers and practitioners.

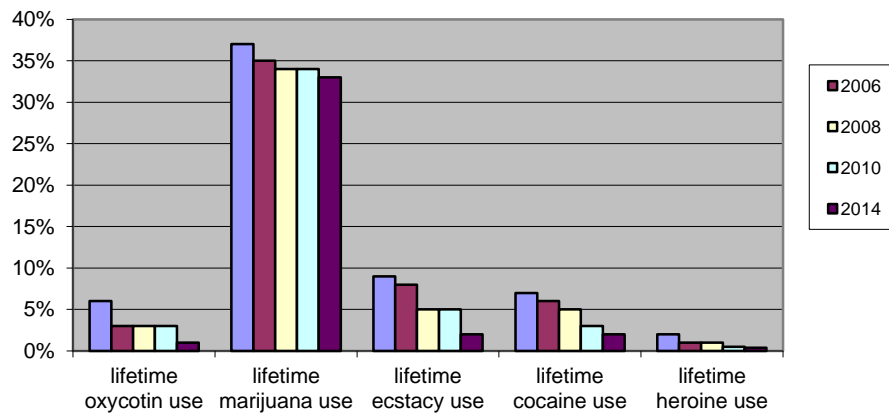
### *Outcomes and Achievements*

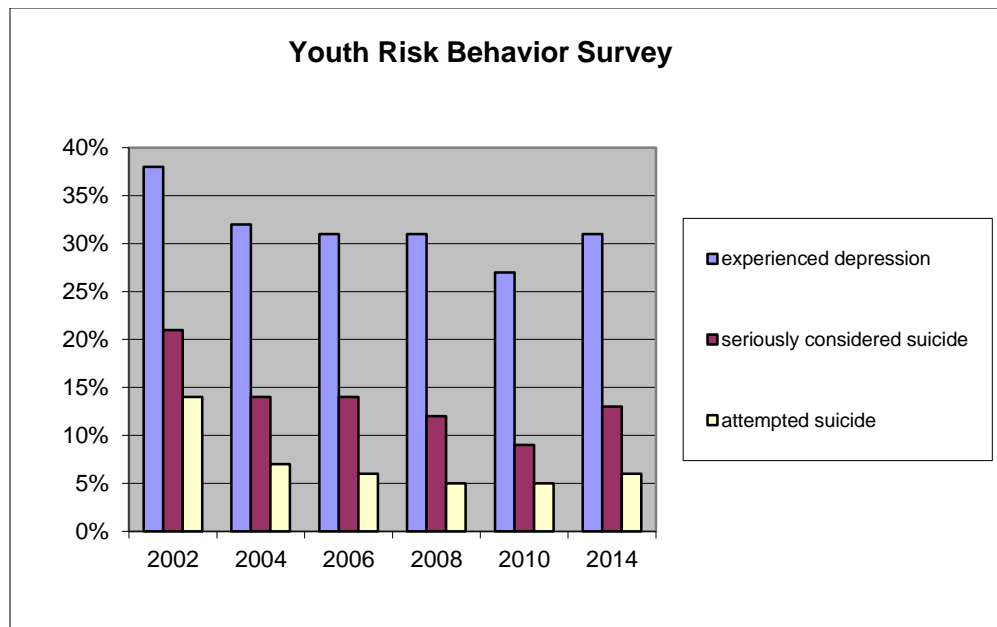
All of this work, combined with the daily meetings, trainings, and opportunities afforded by TE, has contributed to a significant decrease in violent crime among youth, and to an increase in youth-police events and programming, both spontaneous and organized. In fact, according to data from the [City’s annual Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#), levels of violence, substance use, and feelings of depression decreased between 2004 (TE’s implementation in Somerville) and 2014 (though TE’s goals for 2015 include continuing work on mental health issues to further decrease self-reported prevalence of those issues). *See data below.*

## Violence



## Substance Use





In the last three years, of over 400 youth surveyed, 100% reported learning skills that prepared them for the future. 99% built positive relationships with youth and adults they would not otherwise have known. 94% of peace conference attendees reported becoming more aware of how to make a difference in their community and 93% felt more aware of how their actions impact others.

TE's work is recognized nationally and has received several honors, including MetLife Foundation's Community-Police Partnership Award (2012), MassVote's Teen Empowerment award (2011), Harvard University Ash Center Bright Idea (2010 and 2012), Rochester Institute of Technology Center for Public Safety Initiatives Award (2009), Eastern Bank Community Quarterback Award (2008), U.S. Mayor's Conference Best Practice in Youth Development (2007), Bank of America Neighborhood Builder Award (2006) and Drucker Foundation Nonprofit Innovation of the Week (2004).

Dr. Schutt's 2012 study concluded with the following observation: "Teen Empowerment has succeeded in developing and maintaining an approach to engaging at risk youth and reducing youth violence that can serve as a model for other communities. Its systematic approach to selection, engagement, and transformation provide a foundation for individual and community change."<sup>7</sup>

Provide the name of the primary contact for the project. Name & title, organization, address, telephone, and e-mail address. *(This person may be contacted to verify information.)*

Stephanie Berkowitz  
 Director of External Relations  
 The Center for Teen Empowerment, Inc  
 617-536-4266 x304  
[stephanie@teenempowerment.org](mailto:stephanie@teenempowerment.org)  
[www.teenempowerment.org](http://www.teenempowerment.org)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.teenempowerment.org/pdfs/Teen-Empowerment-Somerville-Evaluation-2013.pdf>

## PROJECT TWO

### **Pocket Change Initiative**

In Somerville, the largest percentage of our population falls between the ages of 18 and 35. Of Somerville's nearly 9,700 residents in this age bracket, over 40% are classified as either low- or very-low-income. Moreover, two-thirds of these residents have very little formal post-secondary education. Nationally, just 54% of Americans in this age bracket hold jobs, the lowest rate since 1948. Pocket Change blends the use of mobile technology with traditional workforce development in order to reach the 18-24 out-of-school demographic, with a specific focus on training for lower-income, lower-skilled individuals.

Somerville's unemployment rate remains below the state and national average, but for the individuals in our community who are struggling to find employment all that matters is whether they can get the one job they need. Pocket Change helps us cultivate new job opportunities and give our recent high school graduates and younger workers better incentives to obtain jobs in a competitive market by arming them with the necessary tools and experience.

The Pocket Change Initiative provides participating youth with an opportunity for job progression based on performance. The initiative aims to reduce unemployment for low-income youth in Somerville by 10 percent over 10 years, and is planned and implemented under the guidance of both employers and youth from Somerville's community.<sup>8</sup>

Using the "whole child" lens, Somerville's community partners saw the opportunity to institute systemic changes for younger residents to work to increase job opportunities and job training that will lead to higher wages, more opportunities for homeownership, and increased household income. As part of that strategy, community partners continue to work to support and increase affordable housing, jobs, and job training opportunities for younger residents and families.

To that end, in 2012, Mayor Curtatone convened a Jobs Advisory Committee (JAC) to review the City's job market and labor needs. This cross-sector collaboration included employers, workforce development providers and other community stakeholders. Among the JAC's primary findings were the need to streamline the city's workforce programming, and pay specific attention to the skills gap that are preventing local employers from hiring local residents.

Armed with the Committee's recommendations, the City applied for the [Federal Reserve Bank of Boston's "Working Cities Challenge"](#) competition. The Working Cities Challenge is an effort to improve the social and economic status of residents in Massachusetts' lowest-income communities. The City of Somerville was one of six grantees, receiving \$100,000 to pilot its "Pocket Change" program, an effort to combine soft- and hard-skill training with micro-level job opportunities in order to prepare out-of-school youth, ages 18-24, for well-paying employment.

Pocket Change is designed to connect low-income, out-of-school young adults to full-time employment opportunities and reduce their chances of unemployment. Because many of the program's participants have little formal work experience, the program links them with "micro-level" jobs around the city that provide a bit of "pocket change" and teach on-the-job skills. Pocket Change participants also take part in a series of soft-skill workshops that focus on job readiness skills, such as interviewing, resume writing

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.bostonfed.org/workingcities/cities/Somerville.htm>



and group dynamics, and hard-skill training such as CDL licensing, restaurant training and other certificate programs.

In its first year (2013-14), the Pocket Change program, run in collaboration with the [Somerville Community Corporation](#) and [The Career Place](#), provided more than 50 young adults with job training assistance, helping 21 find permanent employment. Most of the young people served were low-income, first and second generation immigrant, out-of-school youth – a demographic that is traditionally very hard to hire. Over 50 percent of participants speak a second language, and 15 speak English as a second language.

Youth participants in the program complete trainings including skill-building workshops, ranging from resume writing to conflict resolution, and both soft- and hard-skill training for various fields of employment such as restaurant and hospitality, child-care services and commercial drivers' licenses (CDL). The CDL was perhaps the most promising component of the program for young males, as job-seekers with this skill are in high demand locally, and these are typically very well-paying positions with benefits. The City has found creative ways to provide these hard skill training programs at a lower-aggregate cost than if a resident were to enroll in training individually. For instance, it can cost upwards of \$10,000 for a person to complete the CDL training at a private institution; the City was able to provide this same training at an aggregate cost of only \$15,000 for eight young adults combined. Using the grant funding provided by the Federal Reserve Bank, the City was able to cover this cost for young adults entirely, many of whom went on to access full-time, benefitted and union positions upon completion.

In 2014, Pocket Change partnered with Help Around Town, a website that allows businesses and residents to post one-off jobs and part-time employment opportunities at no cost to them, to expand the program to the entire community. While the Pocket Change program targets young adults aged 18-24 just entering the workforce, the Help Around Town platform can be utilized by all residents; anyone can post jobs and/or apply to them. Young adults in the Pocket Change program can identify their membership by using a special badge, and employers can give preference to applicants with the Pocket Change badge on their profile. Pocket Change participants get alerts when new jobs become available and case managers help them to apply and follow up.

As we move forward, the Pocket Change initiative has helped the City understand what works well for youth workforce development, and has allowed us to find unique ways to respond to employers' hiring needs. In 2015, the City and its partners are continuing to identify funding, both locally and nationally, in order to scale this type of programming to reach even more young adults in the future. Perhaps more importantly, we have begun to give shape to an otherwise fragmented workforce development system that was previously inefficient. Now, partners have a clear understanding of each organization's roles and responsibilities and have a streamlined system for serving underprivileged residents looking to improve their skills or find better-paying employment.

Through the site, Pocket Change case managers can track communication between job applicants and employers, assisting each applicant in the application process as they work to eventually match the participant with full-time employment opportunities. Job-posters can contact the Pocket Change case managers to provide feedback when necessary. Several participants in the Pocket Change program who applied for one-off jobs with Somerville businesses through the site and have already transitioned into more permanent employment with a local business.

On a broader level, the Help Around Town platform connects local residents with others in their community, to provide support and job opportunities in a hyper-local way. When you need a second set of hands on a project, this provides a new way to ask your neighbors for help.

### **Program Highlights**

- Over 90 hours were devoted to one on one career sessions.
- Wide array of workshops to provide participants with both soft and hard skills necessary for obtaining and retaining employment.
- 19 youth participated in a total of 10 soft skills workshops
- Three youth attended CDL training provided by the Somerville DPW, one of whom obtained his license and currently works full time for the department.
- Partnered with the Mystic Learning Center Launch Your Future HiSet (GED) Program to schedule regular one on one career sessions with youth offsite

### **Future Plans**

- Align Pocket Change Youth Program with the First Source Jobs Program for adults at Somerville Community Corporation, to integrate services and increase program efficiencies and strengths across ages.
- Strengthen education and training pathways for youth so that they can obtain a job with a livable wage.
- Partner with Bunker Hill Community College and other training providers and organizations.
- Increase case management and one on one coaching.
- Expand job development to create closer partnerships with the private sector, especially small businesses.
- Increase participation of private sector partners in areas such as guest speaking, mentoring, company tours and internships.
- Explore strategies to offer subsidies for transportation, hard skill training, and on-the-job training.

### **Success Stories:**

*Obens is a second generation immigrant who is multi-lingual. He worked with staff for 6.5 total hours of one-on-one career sessions and obtained a job at the historic Somerville Theatre which was a lead directly provided through the program's partnerships. Obens reports that he loves his job at the Theatre as well as a second job at a day care. Obens's case manager also provided support when he was considering dropping out of school and quitting his job due to a customer incident. We are happy to report that Obens is planning to graduate this year and is currently still employed.*

*Tennyson is a recent immigrant. Throughout Pocket Change, he met with staff for 9.5 total hours of one-on-one career sessions, attended a First Source Job Fair, and completed five soft skill workshop trainings and CDL training. He obtained his license and was hired by the City's DPW. Tennyson also obtained his GED at SCALE this year. He is very excited and thankful that the program has helped him gain soft skills such as interview prep, how to prepare for a job fair and fill out job applications online and CDL hard skills training that he would not have been able to afford if it weren't for this program.*

*Stave-Been is a first generation immigrant from Haiti, and is multi-lingual. She worked one-on-one with her case manager for 3.5 hours to apply to jobs and ultimately attended a First Source job fair where she was hired by as part-time intern for translation services. Stave-Been is the first person in her family to attend college. She says she really enjoys her job and gets to work with a lot of intelligent and famous people in the Haitian community and in the City of Somerville.*

## **Lessons Learned**

- Youth who worked closely with the case manager and scheduled multiple one on one career sessions were more likely to obtain employment during the program.
- One on one career sessions and case management had the most significant impact on a participant obtaining a job through the program.
- Youth were most interested in obtaining permanent part-time or full-time positions as opposed to first applying to micro-level job (temporary positions) to gain references and skills.

Provide the project name and a description of its qualitative and quantitative impacts in the past five years. (2,000 word maximum) Tell us the challenge being addressed, actions taken, and the impact/outcomes of this project on your community's residents.

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## **PROJECT THREE**

Provide the project name and a description of its qualitative and quantitative impacts in the past five years. (2,000 word maximum) Tell us the challenge being addressed, actions taken, and the impact/outcomes of this project on your community's residents.

## **Using Music as Prevention**

In Somerville, arts and culture play a tremendous role in shaping our community values. We have more artists and musicians per capita than any community outside of New York City, and it is evident in the number and quality of arts, music, and cultural festivals that draw tens of thousands of community members and visitors to Somerville each year.

Increasingly, these festivals are led, managed, or include high levels of participation by our youngest citizens, in no small part due to the focus on music and music education in our public schools. More importantly, music education in Somerville does not just mean learning to play an instrument or to read music. Music education in Somerville is synonymous with cultural growth and experience. Somerville represents residents from countries all over the world, and it's important that we teach our young residents to celebrate those cultures by learning about one another and by using music as a tool to create positive change in our community.

At its core, music education in Somerville provides the opportunity for students to learn to play an instrument beginning in middle school. What sets Somerville apart is that no student pays to learn. Not one. Whether you are a middle- or upper-class student from a working, two-parent family or you are a recent immigrant from a single parent, low-income family, every student receives the same opportunity to participate in during and after school music programming. What's perhaps more impressive, every student in our seventh and eighth grades *does* play. Compare that to 2005, when less than 15% of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders participated in music ensembles, and overall enrollment in middle and high school in Somerville wavered, there's something to be said about what's happening in Somerville.

Beginning in 2011, **100%** of all 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students continue to participate in a full year ensemble such as Chorus, Band, String Orchestra or World Music Ensemble. At Somerville High School, the average number of students in band, chorus and orchestra was 17 in 2005. In 2011, the average number of students in band, chorus and orchestra was 37. In the same time period, we've increased from three or four students in elementary grades to now more than 60 electing to learn instruments. In the high school chorus, within the last five years, enrollment has increased more than 75% from 25 to 90.

And the numbers aren't just representative of a shift in the thirst for musical knowledge. The Somerville High School Chorus was invited to play at one of President Barack Obama's Inaugural Balls, and has won national awards for their musical achievement. Our World Percussion Ensemble is repeatedly invited to participate in Boston's "First Night" activities on New Year's Eve, and they are a regular fixture in the annual regional HONK! Festival, a weekend-long celebrating that uses street music to promote peace. Our elementary and middle school bands participate in some of the biggest regional parades and celebrations and, in September of 2012, Somerville became the first city in the Northeast to introduce the intensive Venezuelan string program "El Sistema" to its elementary schools. Compare that to our surrounding districts where students pay to enroll in similar programs. Compare that to the districts with less diversity and higher percentages of English speaking students. It's an impressive uptick and an impressive resume for *any* community, but more so when you understand how and why it works.

We like to say that not every challenge is a technical one; there isn't always a simple, cut-and-paste answer to overcome an obstacle. You can't arrest your way out of a citywide crime problem; there are likely many more factors contributing to any given crime pattern that need to be addressed first. Similarly, when we saw drastically low enrollment in our overall music programming, we knew the issue couldn't be solved simply by purchasing additional instruments or adding interesting songs to the repertoire. Finding and *keeping* youth involved in arts and music as an alternative for some youth was a challenge.

Again, we turned to the "whole child" approach. For some youth, high risk behavior is a result of a lack of leadership or coping skills. For some, it's not enough access to caring adults. For still others, it's a need to find positive and like-minded peers, and providing a wide range of activities that will keep them engaged in stimulating and educational programs, whether it's athletics, arts, job training, or whatever the need may be.

Creating a music program that understood the needs and the interests of a changing, diverse community meant creating a sustainable and thriving community of its own.

In 2007, Director of Music, Richard Saunders began to experiment and implement strategies to improve participation in "active music making" at all grade levels in Somerville. Understanding that financial barriers could be contributing to declining enrollment, looking at median family income, families living

below the poverty line, and students qualifying for free or reduced meals in school, Rick sought ways to bring music into the community at reduced rates. What he got was a Mayor who understood how music can be a catalyst for change, especially for communities of opportunity. The Mayor committed \$100,000 to purchase beginner instruments, and program enrollment skyrocketed.

But it's about more than increasing enrollment. It's about finding new, interesting, and innovative ways for youth to channel their emotions, to find acceptance among peers of different backgrounds. It's about fostering the kind of positive relationship building, team building, and friendship that ultimately and statistically boost self-confidence and pride. It's about creating a generation of leaders, and young who leave our community confident, healthy, and happy. It's about creating a true community.

All programs are open to musicians of all levels and abilities, and there is no audition required.

Since 2010, the following programs have been added or changed to reflect this vision:

### [El Sistema Somerville](#)

El Sistema Somerville is an after-school music education program that provides ensemble-based music instruction to third, fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students. Its mission is to instill essential life skills through ensemble and music instruction with caring teachers and mentors.

The program launched in the Fall of 2012, offering intensive study on string instruments through orchestral rehearsals and musicianship training to 75 students in Somerville. In addition to music instruction, students also receive a daily, nutritious snack, weekly academic support, cultural enrichment activities, field trips, and frequent opportunities to perform. Students meet daily for three hours during this after school program, which also therefore ensures these younger students have safe places to stay after school and receive healthy food, which is important as many students in our district do not receive healthy meals outside of public schools.<sup>9</sup> (We also provide a universal free breakfast program for all students.)

This innovative program provides some of our most underserved youth with:

- Access to intensive music education on a sliding scale basis with many scholarship opportunities based on financial need;
- Confidence building and motivation to continue the training through frequent performances;
- Supporting character development and social skills by encouraging student mentorship;
- Developing community engagement;
- Nurturing the whole child by incorporating academic, social, and musical growth.

El Sistema Somerville is an offshoot of Venezuela's national youth orchestra program, El Sistema, founded in 1975 by Dr. Jose Antonio Abreu. His vision was to create a network of orchestras utilizing music as a vehicle for social change. This network provides Venezuelan youth with access to free instruments, intense musical instruction and significant ensemble experience. The program is renowned as the leading innovation in providing equal opportunity for all children to receive the benefit of a thorough, intense musical education. El Sistema Somerville is our City's premiere venture in creating a

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<sup>9</sup> [www.sistemasomerville.org](http://www.sistemasomerville.org)

music program that fosters a sense of equality, community, self-worth, discipline, patience, and commitment.<sup>10</sup>

### *Grooversity and World Percussion Ensemble*

For high school students, a different kind of intensive experience brings together music, culture, and bringing them both together to promote social change.

Marcus Santos, a Berklee College of Music graduate and native of Brazil, brought his world-renowned program, Grooversity (of “groove” and “diversity”), to Somerville in 2007. Marcus, a native of Salvador, Brazil, was living in Somerville when Richard Saunders recruited him to assume a limited faculty roll at Somerville High School. Marcus has been very influential in creating an environment that honors different cultural traditions, and also started an international outreach program called “Grooversity.” One of 12 programs operated around the globe, Grooversity is an innovative and creative drumming project that promotes music as an educational resource, entertainment, and as a catalyst for social change. It utilizes community outreach for positive outcomes while targeting global diversity awareness, bringing activism into entertainment.

In Somerville, the dual mission of Grooversity is to ensure that youth stay in school, and to help new immigrants (youth) to adjust to their new community by connecting with others through music and culture. To facilitate the program in Somerville, Santos leads the Somerville High School’s World Percussion Ensemble, a for-credit class and after school program that teaches rhythm and music from various countries while incorporating peer mentoring and leadership, tiered instruction (beginners play alongside advanced musicians), and community engagement. The Ensemble began in 2007 with seven students. It is currently over-enrolled, with more than 30 students participating each school semester.

Says Santos, “We are attracting the students who are typically in the margins, because they have no experience with musical instruments, because they may not speak English well enough to have confidence to enroll in another school program, or because they do not feel accepted. But we’ve found that music can be a catalyst for social change, even on such a small scale as including peers in something bigger, a music movement. We throw beginning students right into instruction with peers who are more advanced, and we’ve found that students learn exponentially faster and better when instructed directly by those peers. So, we incorporated peer mentorship into our program and bam, we can’t fit all of these kids who want to play in our classroom. It’s powerful to see how excited these students are about music.”

The peer mentorship program has become so successful that the school now offers honors credits for participating.

In addition to in-classroom experience, the Ensemble students are a staple of the Somerville arts community. The group regularly performs at First Night Boston and at TEDx talks around the area. They participate in the annual HONK Festival, a celebration utilizing music to promote peace.

Provide name of the primary contact for the project. Name & title, organization, address, telephone, and e-mail address. *(This person may be contacted to verify information.)*

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<sup>10</sup> [www.sistemasomerville.org](http://www.sistemasomerville.org)



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*End of Application. Thank you for submitting your All-America City Award Application!*

**Submit the application:**

**1) by email ([aac@ncl.org](mailto:aac@ncl.org)) or fax (888-314-6053) by Tuesday, March 10, 2015, 11:59 p.m. PST; and,  
2) mail one hard copy with \$200(\*You only pay \$100 application fee if you submit a Letter of Intent to Apply by November 25) application fee to:**

**National Civic League, 6000 East Evans Ave., Suite 3-012, Denver, Colorado 80222. NEW NCL ADDRESS!**

Need additional guidance? Email [aac@ncl.org](mailto:aac@ncl.org) or go to [www.allamericacityaward.com](http://www.allamericacityaward.com) for announcements of upcoming conference calls for prospective applicants, links to the 2014 event program featuring the projects of 2014 participating communities, videos of the previous jury presentations, and more or call NCL at 303-571-4343.

**Timeline:**

September 2014-February 2015 – Monthly conference calls with NCL staff and AAC community leaders to learn more about the benefits of AAC, application tips for success, and to share best practices.

November 25, 2014 -- Letter of Intent to Apply Due. \*Save \$100 of the application fee if you submit a Letter of Intent to Apply by November 21, 2014.

March 10, 2015, Tuesday -- Application Due

Early April 2015 -- Finalists Announced  
Finalist community-wide delegations will be invited to Denver to present.

April-June 2015 – Finalist communities assemble your cross-sector community delegation to present your story at the June 2015 awards event and peer-learning conference. Raise the funds to send your delegation to the June event in Denver. *Finalist community delegations will be asked to present their story to a national jury of civic, local government, business, philanthropy, and community experts. All applicants are invited to participate in the June workshops and networking opportunities!*

June 11-14, 2015, Peer-Learning Workshops & Awards Competition/Presentation in Denver, Colorado

July 2015-Feb 2016, All-America Cities tell their community's story through a series of AAC/NCL coordinated conference calls and regional forums to the AAC network.